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2008

# Annual HIGHER Ground Women's Leadership Conference 2008

The Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute at Virginia Commonwealth University  
*Virginia Commonwealth University*, [gehli@vcu.edu](mailto:gehli@vcu.edu)

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GRACE E. HARRIS  
LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE  
HIGHER GROUND  
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM  
LUNCHEON



**LUNCHEON KEYNOTE SPEAKER**  
**STACY HAWKINS ADAMS**  
*nationally acclaimed author, speaker  
and freelance journalist*

*Born a Woman*  
*Born a Leader*

**FEATURED WORKSHOP SPEAKERS**



**David Leong**  
*Professor*  
VCU Theater  
Department



**Aaron Anderson**  
*Associate Professor*  
VCU Theater  
Department



**Najmah Thomas**  
*Project Officer*  
The Cameron  
Foundation



**Deborah Davis**  
*Chief Operating  
Officer*  
VCU Medical Center

FRIDAY, JANUARY 18, 2008  
12:00 PM — 5:00 PM  
COMFORT INN CONFERENCE CENTER  
3200 WEST BROAD STREET  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA

VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY  
GRACE E. HARRIS LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE  
HIGHER GROUND  
WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM  
ANNUAL LUNCHEON

*Born a Woman*  
**Born a Leader**

FRIDAY, JANUARY 18, 2008  
COMFORT INN CONFERENCE CENTER  
3200 WEST BROAD STREET  
RICHMOND, VIRGINIA



11:00 a.m.      **Registration**

12:00 p.m.      **Welcoming Remarks**      *Dr. Grace E. Harris*, Distinguished Professor  
Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute  
Virginia Commonwealth University

12:10 p.m.      **Alumna Speaker**      *Reverend Angela S. Duncan*, Chaplain  
MCV Hospitals, VCU Medical Center  
Higher Ground Alumna, Class of 2007

-Buffet Lunch-

12:50 p.m.      **Introduction of Speaker**      *Dr. Nakeina E. Douglas*, Director  
Grace E. Harris Leadership Institute  
Virginia Commonwealth University

1:00 p.m.      **Keynote Speaker**      *Stacy Hawkins Adams*, Author  
*21st Century Women Leading with Excellence*

1:30 p.m.      -Break-

1:45 p.m.      **Afternoon Plenary**

**Session A- Leadership with Presence**..... Jefferson Room

*David Leong*, Professor

*Aaron Anderson*, Associate Professor

Theater Department, Virginia Commonwealth University

**Session B- Leadership: Personal & Professional**.....Harrison Room

*Deborah Davis*, Chief Operating Officer

MCV Hospitals, VCU Medical Center

**Session C- The Power of Partnerships** .....Dining Room

*Najmah Thomas*, Program Officer

The Cameron Foundation

3:15 p.m.      -Break-

3:30 p.m.      **Networking Session**

2008 HIGHER Ground Women's Leadership Development Luncheon  
Comfort Inn Midtown, Richmond Virginia  
January 18, 2008

~Keynote Speaker~



**Stacy Hawkins Adams** is a nationally acclaimed author, speaker and freelance journalist whose novels help readers laugh, heal and seek to lead more meaningful lives.

Her debut novel, ***Speak To My Heart***, was voted 2004 Best New Multicultural Christian Fiction, and Stacy was named 2004 Best New Multicultural Christian Fiction Author by Shades of Romance Magazine. Black Expressions Book Club dubbed her a literary "Rising Star."

Her second book, ***Nothing But the Right Thing***, has been a Barnes & Noble local bestseller, a Black Expressions Book Club Main Selection, and was chosen as a 2006 Summer Reading "Featured Selection" for Sybil's Book Club on the syndicated Tom Joyner Morning Show. The book recently was nominated for a 2007 Library of Virginia Literary Award in the fiction category. ***Watercolored Pearls***, her third novel, deals with the issues of self-esteem, grace, transformation and God's abiding love. It will be nationally released in October 2007. She also penned a short story, *The Inheritance*, for ***The Midnight Clear***, an anthology of inspirational holiday tales written by more than 20 Christian fiction writers, including Essence bestselling authors Kendra Norman-Bellamy, Patricia Haley and Tia McCollors.

A former reporter and columnist for the Richmond Times-Dispatch, Stacy now freelances for a variety of publications, including **Heart & Soul** and **Gospel Today** magazines, AARP's **Bulletin** and on [www.Crosswalk.com](http://www.Crosswalk.com). She publishes a nationally-distributed electronic newsletter called *Life Untapped*<sup>™</sup> that highlights prominent inspirational fiction and nonfiction authors and writing industry news each month. She also pens an online parenting column for Virginia Governor Tim Kaine's Smart Beginnings initiative and a bi-monthly newspaper column for working mothers called *Life Notes*. Stacy regularly appears on national and local radio programs to discuss the themes of self-acceptance, forgiveness and unconditional love that provide the foundation for her novels. Her journalistic work has allowed her to serve as an occasional broadcast reporter, and she has been a featured guest on the *Montel Williams Show*.

She is the president of the Richmond affiliate of the **American Christian Fiction Writers** and serves on the board of the **James River Writers**. When she's not writing or speaking, she devotes considerable time to an issue close to her heart - encouraging a love of reading in disadvantaged children. She promotes youth literacy through the Richmond affiliate of [Reach Out and Read Virginia](http://ReachOutandRead.org).



# 2008 HIGHER Ground Women's Leadership Development Luncheon

Comfort Inn Midtown, Richmond Virginia

January 18, 2008

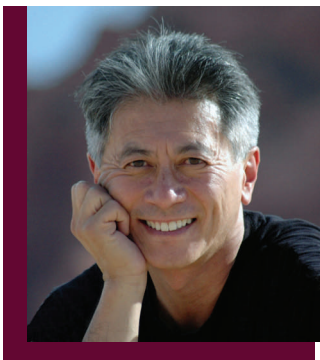
## Featured Speakers



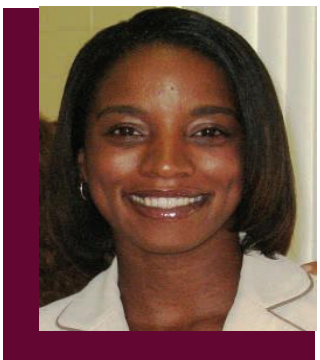
**Aaron D. Anderson** is currently a tenured Associate Professor of Theatre at Virginia Commonwealth University. He holds an Interdisciplinary PhD in Culture from Northwestern University and an MFA in Theatre from the University of Hawaii at Manoa. Together with Dr. Alan Dow and Professor David Leong, Aaron is currently teaching leadership workshops for the VCU/MCV School of Nursing, the Departments of Internal Medicine, Surgery and Palliative Care as well as executives throughout the US. In addition to his work in theatre and drama, he specializes in qualitative and mixed-method research design, pedagogy and curriculum design, theories of the body and methods of movement analysis. He is a recognized expert on media violence and on the use of theatre training and performance studies in applied social science, and has designed the curricula for several national and international teacher certification programs.



**Deborah W. Davis** has achieved a measure of success that is enjoyed by a very select group of women – about a dozen to be exact – in the United States, serving as a Chief Operating Officer and President of two different major academic medical centers. She currently is the COO of one of the nation's premier academic medical centers. A part of Virginia Commonwealth University, the MCV Campus houses nearly 100 specialty clinics and patient care centers, many of national and international note. The hospital has 779 licensed beds and serves as a regional referral center for the southeastern United States. Prior to joining the VCU Health System, Davis' career spanned 32 years at Pitt County Memorial Hospital in Greenville, North Carolina, the flagship hospital for University Health Systems of Eastern Carolina that also serves as the teaching hospital for the Brody School of Medicine at East Carolina University. She served as President of PCMH from 2002-2007 after serving 12 years as Senior Vice President of the region's largest hospital.



**David S. Leong** is Chairman, Professor and Producer of the Department of Theatre at VCU. His 32 year career in higher education has included faculty appointments at the Juilliard School, the University of Maryland and Brandeis University. He has conducted workshops for over 250 professional organizations throughout the U.S. in leadership, communication, acting and movement. He is currently teaching communication skills to executives, physicians and nurses throughout the US. As a professional theatre artist David's work in the field of staging action and fight choreography and has been seen in on Broadway, Off-Broadway, London's West End and in feature films. He has personally coached or directed many stars of TV, film and stage including Val Kilmer, Christopher Plummer, Woody Harrelson, Sigourney Weaver, Winona Ryder, Marisa Tomei, Kevin Spacey, Mary McDonnell, Joan Cusack, Raul Julia, Christopher Walken, and Don Cheadle.



**Najmah Thomas** is currently employed as a Program Officer for The Cameron Foundation. Her portfolio includes economic development, workforce development, arts & culture, historic preservation, human service, healthcare, and education programs. Prior to her appointment with the Foundation, she served as the Deputy Director for the Crater Regional Workforce Investment Group, where she was responsible for ensuring the development and implementation of effective employment and training programs in nine cities and counties in south central Virginia. Ms. Thomas is the Founder and immediate past chairperson for Prince & Princess, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to preparing young boys and girls to be leaders of themselves and their community. She also serves as the Youth Advisor for the Organization of Progressive Achieving Leaders – Petersburg Chapter.